

Basic Information

Region (Check Region):

Scotland

Category:

30. PR Consultancy of the Year

Entry Information

Entrant company name:

3x1 Group

Entry title:

20 years of 3x1

Entry

Number of employees and annual fee income:

16
£1.4m

Business objectives and analysis of performance against budget over the last two years:

Grow fee income by 10%, improve profitability

- Post-pandemic fee income +17.5%
- Q1 2021 financial performance strongest since 2013
- All new private sector clients on increased day rate (+20% on previous)
- Profit/executive +35%
- Commercial training/new system to make teams more aware/accountable for overservicing

Develop more profitable revenue streams

- New specialists in reputation management, policy/public affairs, digital strategy, social media, videography
- Pivoted media training to virtual including additional content on Zoom interviews
- Launched virtual event offering
- Extended partner/freelance network including designers/strategists/political advisers
- Developing hotdesking/studio facilities for freelance creatives

Develop best-in-class people

- New appraisal system, personal objectives linked to business plan/company values
- Job descriptions being refreshed against Global Alliance Capability Framework
- Continued investment in 3x1 Comms Academy: 1 hour weekly CPD time, £1000 annual training budget/employee, CIPR Diploma/Chartership (paid study time)
- Training delivered includes tender writing, evaluation, objective setting, dealing with media, also mindfulness, time management to support wellbeing

Strengthen employer of choice credentials

- IIP Gold accreditation
- Refreshed induction programme, adapted to virtual new-starts – highlighted by IIP as exceptional example
- Benchmarked salaries/holidays/benefits against CIPR State of the Profession
- Companywide salary increase in 2019, bonuses 2019/2020
- Increased pension/£2k holiday contribution introduced for long-service
- Two Mental Health First Aiders trained
- Developing mental health plan, resource library
- £12k social budget transferred to virtual events/gifting
- Flexible/part-time/hybrid working

Operate ethically, responsibly and sustainably

- People strategy aligned to Scottish Government's Fair Work Framework
- Living Wage accredited
- Measure gender pay gap annually – currently -0.26% (national average 7.4%)
- Achieved Cyber Essentials accreditation
- Disability Confident Committed Employer
- Resource Efficient Scotland Silver accreditation – working towards Gold
- Introduced environmental awareness training in inductions
- Sustainability on board meeting agenda

A brief overview of business / team strategy:

Our mission is to inspire our people to deliver outstanding work to retain client trust ensuring long-term business sustainability.

2021 marks our 20th anniversary. Rather than pat ourselves on the back for reaching this milestone we've undertaken a strategic review of the business to ensure it is fit for future – we fully intend to be toasting 40 years.

For the first time every employee took part in developing our 2021 business plan, built around:

- Brand
- Business development
- Client experience and engagement
- People and culture

Everyone, from account executive upwards, has ownership of part of the plan to grow accountability, empowerment and commercial acumen.

In 2021 we launched a new operating model playing to individuals' strengths - whether as

account handlers or specialists - following a detailed skills review and succession planning/talent management sessions. It offers our people alternative career development paths to the traditional agency structure and adds value for clients, allowing them to tap into specialised services when required. We created a managing director role for the first time.

We have a people-first culture: staff satisfaction = client satisfaction. This culture has never been more important than operating through the pandemic. We moved quickly to implement additional systems to support wellbeing/resilience:

- Total trust approach to homeworking
- Daily all-staff Teams calls to support communication
- Complete transparency/collegiate approach to resourcing/furlough decisions
- 6-weekly anonymous healthcheck surveys tracking emotional wellbeing/working routines, most recently 100% of staff said they felt secure, supported and productive
- Signposted external resources eg CIPR Mental Health Helpline
- 121 personal development discussions with directors to reassure pandemic hasn't hindered career progression
- Paid time off for COVID community response volunteering

Our goal was to get through the pandemic as a team: in our IIP assessment staff said they felt more engaged and closer than ever.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

- CIPR corporate affiliate: CPD compulsory
 - Marketing Society/ASPA members
 - PRCA member, only Measurement Champion in Scotland
 - Weekly updates from 3x1 industry body representatives on training/networking opportunities
 - Twice-yearly appraisals with PDP plans, objectives linked to business plan/company values
 - External coaching/leadership development
 - 1to1 director mentoring
 - PRCA Communication Management Standard: Gold (for 10+ years)
 - PRCA Public Affairs Register, UK Lobbying Register plus statutory registers
 - Participate in Robert Gordon University Industry Advisory Board, support Queen Margaret University's annual student placements
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A summary of recent outstanding achievements, including client list growth / retention:

Business achievements

- 20th anniversary - launched rebrand, new website
- Q1 2021 best financial performance in eight years
- 40+ new clients/projects including SEPA, Avison Young, The Ivy, Scottish National Investment Bank, Laings the Jewellers
- Retained longest-standing clients: Lees (20 years), Atos (14 years), Barclays/Camelot (12 years)
- All-staff bonus 2019, 2020

- PR Week 2020 Top 150 (17th consecutive year)
- PRCA DARE Awards Large Consultancy of the Year 2019 and 2020

Team achievements

- Secured IIP Gold May 2021: “They’re so open and transparent – everything is shared”, “Everybody felt part of the solution”, “Really, genuinely collaborative”
 - 10 CIPR Accredited practitioners
 - Five internal promotions
 - Seven new specialist roles created
 - Six industry awards for campaigns
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A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:

Brief

When COVID restrictions eased in July 2020, there was a worrying increase in littering. Parks and beauty spots were strewn with rubbish. Our client Zero Waste Scotland decided to act.

Objectives

- Position litter prevention as positive behaviour, achieving 80% positive sentiment/2m campaign reach
- Engage younger audience by securing 3m social media impressions/three influencer partnerships
- Recruit 70 partner organisations/community groups to share campaign content to raise awareness
- Encourage Scots to bin their litter by directing them to website: 50,000 unique visitors, 500+ toolkit downloads

Strategy

We developed an emotive integrated campaign to harness pride in the country’s natural beauty and encourage people to bin/take home their rubbish.

The creative was a clear call to action: Scotland is Stunning – let’s keep it that way. Beautiful landscape imagery featured contexts that had been struggling with littering.

We invested in influencer marketing to target our younger audience, including TikTok, a first for ZWS.

Tactics

- Media relations: press releases, interviews, thought leadership
- Paid social targeting stakeholders/family audience: Twitter/Facebook/Instagram/ Open Web/YouTube
- Influencer engagement and paid social targeting younger audience: Instagram/Spotify/YouTube/TikTok
- Stakeholder engagement including downloadable toolkit

Outputs:

- 127 pieces of coverage
- 14.7m campaign reach
- Three influencer partnerships
- 6.6m digital impressions
- 944k social reach

Outtakes:

- 53k unique website visitors
- 800 toolkit downloads
- 1m video views
- 98% positive sentiment
- 63k social engagements
- 23 partners, 19/32 councils used customised assets

Outcomes:

- 100% of councils reported reduction in littering
- Advocacy from 100+ stakeholders – largest ever for ZWS litter campaigns

Marketing Society STAR Awards: Best Public Sector Campaign (Silver)

Vuelio Online Influence Awards: Best Cause-Led Influence Campaign

Supporting Information